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War Time Control of Industry. The Experience of England. By HOWARD L. GRAY. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1918. Pp. xv, 307. \$1.75.)

Without a trace of mischievous bias, Professor Gray gives us here an admirable study of England's struggle since 1914 to control specific economic forces. But a few years ago it would have been called a study in interference with economic laws. Yet never could a stronger case be made out—that such “laws” after all exist—than in the three years' experience here noted. There is not a change or an upturning that has not depended for its success on discovering and obeying certain business and human conditions already present. The real achievements in stimulating production, saving the waste in distribution and consumption, have nowhere come except to those who have reckoned wisely with average motives largely economic. The most momentous lesson from these attempts seems to me the repeated discovery that, to get the efficiency for which the change is made, the entire group interests concerned have to be discovered and administratively recognized; and all this to a degree never before necessary.

Again and again things halt because some important section of the business in hand is forgotten or left out. It is not enough to supplement the soldier by the civilian. The manufacturer, the buyer, the distributor, and even narrower interests, have to be brought into the game. Many a delay was owing to the tardy discovery of what the leading interests were. The gravest blunders with organized labor were in forgetting or ignoring its representation. The immense sacrifice of giving up those “standards” for which the unions had fought for more than a century has had some unforeseen rewards; never has labor got such “recognition” or come so near to substantial partnership in industrial control as in the period here covered. However much controlled business may go back to the old ways, organized labor is not in the least likely to give up this newly won power. That labor the world over, as well as foremost scientific bodies, is now asking to have its place in cabinets and even among the diplomacies is a sign of what this wider infusion of interests may accomplish in transforming politics and parliamentary traditions.

In such studies of “control” and attempted control as this, one sees the promise of economic and political changes which are at least the conditions of a more rational world order. The author chooses chiefly English experience, noting with real advantage our

own successive steps in voluntary and compulsory regulation. There is much common experience, but also there are differences which throw quite as much light on future problems. Besides the Introduction, there are ten chapters of illustration and exposition in which—through three stages—the reader sees the struggle to reorganize industry and a great deal of the motive lying behind it.

In the first hours but one thing was seen with clearness—the railways must be taken from private management. From this first plunge, the question is always the same: For national safety, what is the next urgency? If England produces no sugar, that must be brought under collective supervision. Then wheat, munitions, wool, hides, coal, shipping, and the like, follow in the order of recognized need. What each step would involve of further and unified action seems not in the least to have been seen.

At the beginning of the war access to the supply of raw sugar was forbidden to private enterprises; prices were promptly fixed and have since been changed at will; taxes have incidentally been collected from all consumers; finally an imperfect scheme of distribution has been replaced by a more equitable one. The steady shrinkage of available stores has, furthermore, turned this scheme of distribution into a rationing of the population, the first imposition in Great Britain of compulsory economy.

What labor would do under patriotic exhortation or under threat had to be learned after a good deal of blundering. What hours and what pace labor could take with best results in terms of efficiency had to be learned in the same costly way. One wonders if the workmen's "leaving certificates" would have proved a failure if the men had from the first been as carefully consulted as were railroad directors before the "taking over."

As in three of the most important English reports, we see in this study how formidable a task it has been to carry explanation along with forced changes in popular habits. Wherever the reasons for change have been so made as to be fairly understood, the popular acquiescence has upon the whole followed as it has in our country.

It is too soon to guess intelligently what this assent to extreme collective control in war will mean when peace is restored. A dispassionate investigation like this shows not only that we have been compelled to think and to act internationally but that in the process we shall learn some priceless lessons. Terms as desperately vague as "a fair price" are being subjected to practical

tests of the utmost value for future uses. Whether in production, distribution, or consumption, we are learning about the range and nature of human motives. Those who have clamored that "all profiteering should be stopped" have seen that without some measure of private profits production was almost automatically checked. Those, on the other hand, who insisted that "interference with economic laws," price fixing and regulation generally, would work nothing but confusion, have been quite as wide of the mark. Whatever the record of failure, the author's chapters leave no doubt either as to the necessity or the wisdom of this "wartime control."

In the admirable summary with which the book closes the essential differences between English and American experience are clearly set down. In spite of appearances, this lunge toward state socialism has modified motives among all manner of workers less fundamentally than is popularly believed. We had learned before the war that the later extensions of collectivism had disturbed the main capitalistic motive far less than socialists and others had predicted. It is but another illustration of the power and skill with which private property adapts itself to altered environment.

The author shows that our capacity and our willingness to learn from foreign experience will have severe testing. Shall we venture on some form of "leaving certificate"? Shall we overstimulate labor by the patriotic appeals and by bonus and overtime and later have to correct it? Shall we allow "dilution" to go to dangerous lengths? Shall we draft men from sections of industry every whit as important as work in the trench and then have to call them back? Shall we check our insane bidding for labor from one industry to another with only loss and embarrassment to national output?

These are a few of the issues on which Professor Gray's record does not throw light if we are wise enough to heed his conclusions.

JOHN GRAHAM BROOKS.

NEW BOOKS

ABBOTT, W. C. *The expansion of Europe. A history of the foundations of the modern world.* (New York: Holt. 1918. Pp. xxi, 512; xiii, 463. \$6.50.)

BISHOP, J. B. *A chronicle of one hundred and fifty years. The Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, 1768-1918.* (New York: Scribners' Sons. 1918. Pp. xvi, 311. \$5.)